



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT**

**WORKSHOP
ARRIGONI BRIDGE PROJECT**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020
5:30 PM**

MINUTES

The Special Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Middletown, a workshop *Presentation By, and Discussion With, Mayor Benjamin Florsheim and Connecticut State Department of Transportation RE: Arrigoni Bridge Project to Commence Spring, 2020* was held in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building on Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 5:30 PM.

Present: Councilwoman Jeanette White Blackwell (5:38PM) Councilman Vincent Loffredo, Dep. Mayor
Councilwoman Meghan Carta Councilman Anthony Mangiafico
Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr. Councilman Edward McKeon
Councilman Darnell Ford Councilman Eugene Nocera
Councilman Edward Ford, Jr. Councilman Philip Pessina
Councilman Anthony Gennaro, Sr. Councilwoman Linda Salafia

Mayor Benjamin D. Florsheim, Chair
Linda Reed, Council Clerk
Officer Kurt Scrivo, Middletown Police, Sergeant-at-Arms,

Also Present: Barbara Knoll Peterson, Mayor's Administrative Assistant
Brig Smith, Esq., General Counsel
Christopher Holden, PPE, Deputy Director – Public Works

Members of the Public: 4

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Vincent Loffredo calls the meeting to order at 5:32 PM. He leads the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk reads the Call of the Meeting and the Chair declares the call a legal call and the meeting a legal meeting.

2. Public Comment Opens

The Chair opens the public comment session at 5:34 PM. He invites anyone wishing to speak to come to podium. He asks that speakers state their name and address for the record and that comments are limited to a five (5) minutes.

Beth Emery (76 West Poplar Avenue): She is a Middletown resident and thanks the Council for the opportunity to speak. She notes that many have heard her before and she hopes that they have received the nine (9) page packet of information, which she submitted for consideration.

Beth Emery Comments for March 10, 2020 public meeting with CT DOT for work scheduled to begin Spring 2020 Regarding Middletown, CT CTDOT Projects

Project 0082-0320 St John's Square; Rapallo Ave. improvements
Project 0082-0319 Main St. bump-outs; Washington St and Main St improvements
Project 0082-0312 Rehabilitation of the Approach Spans for Arrigoni Bridge

PART ONE

The documents that are referred to Part Two

Below is the link to the three different plan documents from CTDOT

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3Ac93c6a25-7220-4e90-92a1-3a0ddb36b3aa> They are plotted dates of 5/23/19 and 9/25/19

Other applicable CT DOT documents can be found on the extensive BikePedDashboard. I presume that CTDOT as well as Middletown's planners, engineers, and public works departments are all very familiar with these documents and policy directives. I highlight below some of the key documents that I will reference in questions and remarks on the specifics of the plans.

- On Oct 20, 2014 the Connecticut Department of Transportation issued a policy document Complete Streets Policy (Executive Order 31) so as to be in compliance with CT general statutes. In part it states; *"it is the policy of the Department to consider the needs of all users of all abilities and ages (specifically including pedestrians, bicyclist, transit users, and vehicle operators) in the planning, programming, design, construction, retrofit and maintenance activities related to all roads and streets as a means of providing a "safe, efficient transportation network with enhance quality of life and vitality."*
- In January of 2019 the Connecticut Department of Transportation formally adapted an Active Transportation Plan (ATP) that in part provides guidelines for the Complete Streets general statutes. The above link provides an additional library of resources including the:
 - 2019 Connecticut Active Transportation Plan Appendices
 - Within the Appendices is the Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel Needs Assessment Form (BPTNA) that states: *"In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, Section 13a-153f, Accommodations and Provisions of Facilities for All Users and the Department's Policy Statement No. EX.0-31, It is the policy of the Department to consider the needs of all users of all abilities and ages (specifically including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and vehicle operators) in the planning, programming, design, construction, retrofit and maintenance activities related to all roads and streets as a means of providing a "safe, efficient transportation network which enhances quality of life and economic vitality." Therefore, the need for inclusion of accommodations specifically for bicyclists and pedestrians, including those with disabilities, must be reviewed for every project."*
 - CTDOT also writes in the ATP that *"The form requires such information as a description of existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities within or near the project limits, a review of bicycle and pedestrian crash data in the project area, and a review of existing or planned bicycle or pedestrian traffic generators, such as parks and schools. The form is expected to be completed to the extent possible during a project's scoping phase with continual review throughout the Preliminary Design. Upon completion of Preliminary Design, the form is also completed and attached to the Preliminary Design Report for each project."*
- The 2019 Connecticut Pedestrian Safety Guide includes the stated vision *"to provide a safe transportation system where people of all ages and abilities can walk, bike, and travel by automobile safely and comfortably on Connecticut roadways."*
- Incorporating On-Road Bicycle Networks Into Resurfacing Projects (FHWA 3/2016) -- States that *"Installing bicycle facilities during roadway resurfacing projects is an efficient and cost-effective way for communities to create connected networks of bicycle facilities. This workbook provides recommendations for how roadway agencies can integrate bicycle facilities into their resurfacing program. The workbook also provides methods for fitting bicycle facilities onto existing roadways, cost considerations, and case studies."*
- Type: Design Guides | National Association of City Transportation Officials -- The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) have Complete Streets guidelines available that are of great value and often provide better design guidelines than what is offered by the FHWA. Presumably, the city of Middletown has copies of the NACTO guidelines which are listed as a resource on the CTDOT dashboard.

The following is reprinted from CTDOT's web site; Route 9 Middletown "Removal of Traffic Signals on Route 9 and Main Street Improvements" you will see them again in Part 2, with questions and comments added in.

- **Project 0082-0320** is proposed to reduce congestion and improve safety at the intersection of St. John's Square and Main Street with the addition of two turn lanes as well as geometric realignment. Hartford Avenue, which becomes Saint John's Square at its intersection with Main Street, operates as an on and off ramp for Route 9. It currently intersects Route 9 at a three-way signalized intersection, providing both northbound and southbound access to and from Main Street. The four-lane cross section of St. John's Square intersects Main Street in a curve, creating a large roadway footprint.

The proposed work includes the addition of two turn lanes on St. John's Square westbound. Widening will occur on the southbound side in order to incorporate the two new lanes as well as a proposed median island. In addition, geometric improvements will be made to the intersection by way of median islands on Main Street that will serve to normalize the alignment. Rapallo Avenue, which currently consists of one lane in each direction and on-street parking on both sides of the street, will be converted into a one-way street in the westbound direction with limited on-street parking. Grand Street will be widened for the addition of an eastbound turn lane. Widening will also occur at the northwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Washington Street to accommodate a dedicated right-turn lane.

- **Project 0082-0319** is proposed to enhance pedestrian safety and reduce vehicular congestion by constructing sidewalk bump-outs to shorten pedestrian crossing distances along Main Street. Main Street is a north-south running four lane arterial with on-street parking on both sides of the road. It is the main arterial for downtown Middletown, providing access for pedestrians and vehicles to many restaurants and shops. Due to the on-street parking, current crosswalk distances are between 80 and 96 feet, creating long pedestrian phases which in turn lead to poor vehicular levels of service. This project will construct sidewalk bump-outs to effectively shorten the required crossing distance for pedestrians. A total of 18 bump-outs are proposed that will reduce the pedestrian crossing distances to approximately 55 feet, shortening the pedestrian phase. This will reduce the overall delay experienced at each intersection and improve the level of service. The presence of on street parking reduces the sightlines between a waiting pedestrian and vehicles on Main Street. The bump-

outs will relocate the sidewalk ramps even with the end of the parking stalls, improving the visibility for the pedestrian and motorist and increasing safety.

- **Project 0082-0312** is for the rehabilitation of the Arrigoni Bridge approach spans carrying Routes 17 and 66 in Middletown and Portland. This project will take place simultaneously with the Saint John's Square/Main Street intersection operational improvement project in Middletown. Work on the Arrigoni approach spans consists of replacing the bridge decks, superstructure steel upgrades and repairs as well as substructure repairs to improve the overall structural capacity, reliability and integrity of the bridge. Additionally, a new protective fence system ranging in height from 8 to 12-feet, will also be installed on both the approach and main spans as part of this project. Work on St. John's Square and Main Street consists of the geometric realignment of the intersection to improve safety and operational efficiency, as well as the addition of two turn-lanes.

RELATED, BUT not in the scope of work that is being presented at the March 10, 2020 meeting.

- **Project 0082-0318** is proposed to reduce congestion, improve safety, and improve access to downtown Middletown by removing two existing traffic signals on Route 9. Connecticut Route 9 is a north/south running freeway except for a short section of non-freeway in the downtown Middletown area where it overlaps with Route 17. This section of Route 9 stretches for approximately 0.36 miles (from exit 15 to exit 16) and includes two at-grade signalized intersections. These signalized intersections contribute to significant delays and crashes. The most recent three-year crash history (January 2015 to December 2017) shows that there were 313 crashes resulting in 91 injuries including 1 fatality within the project limits.

PART TWO

Provides the reasons why the current plan is incomplete, and makes the case for why Middletown and CT DOT need to review and make some substantial changes to this plan to reflect the tenants of complete streets before beginning construction.

I understand from reading the documents on CTDOT BikePedDashboard that all projects are required to comply with Complete Streets protocols and the ATP. This is a great opportunity for the City of Middletown, CT DOT, and resident stakeholders to work together and come up with a Complete Streets plan for this area that is truly rigorous and integrated with all the principles the documents on the dashboard prescribe and more. I urge the CTDOT and Middletown to review the plans initiated before 2019, plotted in 2019 after the adaptations of the ATP (but then not scheduled for construction until 2020) so that they reflect all the considerations in the ATP and included the objectives of the Oct 23, 2014 Complete Streets Policy (Executive Order 31). This project has the potential to be a shining example of what can be done and done well when state and national complete streets protocols are followed. Main St Middletown is a vibrant downtown area, adjacent—in very close proximity—are neighborhoods that will remain, and hopefully thrive if CTDOT plans provide for them to do so.

Often "Complete Streets" is thought of as a transportation issue to make a city more bike and pedestrian friendly, and that it is, but it is also much, much more! Complete Streets initiatives are about live-ability and sustainable living, which is a top priority for myself and I believe many Middletown residents—particularly those who live, work, visit, and go to school in the neighborhoods in and around these project areas. Bike-ability and walkability are critical for the neighborhoods these projects affect, and for all who choose to go, or have no option except to go car free.

Questions, Comments, Observations on Complete Streets

The three plans being discussed at this meeting should provide for:

The safety of all pedestrians (all pedestrians—mothers with carriages, wheelchair users, children, the frail, and those disabled but not in a wheelchair) and those who then become transit users—as a primary objective given the density of our urban/downtown location on state road 66, Middletown's downtown, Main St.

Observation - The current set of plans do not appear to take into consideration the economic, environmental, health/safety, and social justice concerns of pedestrians, the neighborhood, and the city's downtown. In as much as observed speed in adjacent neighborhoods has been consistently complained about as excessive, the plan should provide for traffic calming, and slower traffic on Main St., Grand Ave., Spring St., N. Main St., and Rapallo Rd. The plan must assure that the speed of traffic does not increase, only that the movement of traffic improves with the changes—in fact I would hope traffic speeds decrease. The DOT plans should add to the vibrant quality of life in downtown, and in no way detract from this vibrancy.

- a) **The safety of bicyclists.**
Observation - The three plans do not include the word bicycle or any infrastructure consideration or traffic related studies on the impact to a bicyclist, let alone any plans to improve conditions for bicyclists. Arguably, the plans will make the intersections more dangerous for bicyclists.
- b) **Considerations of what a Complete Street can and should look like.**
Observation - The current design plans appear to give the motoring public top priority to get somewhere in less time and more efficiently above the needs of those who live, work, visit, bike, walk, and go to school in these project areas, though your documents state that all users be considered equally.
Considerations on Complete Streets Design Criteria
 - Please substantiate what speed limits the plans are designed for.
 - Please describe what speed reduction mechanisms and traffic calming provisions are embedded in all of the plans along Main St. to keep the speed of motorists at the speed limit.

- Please describe how and if lane width management is being used throughout the plan areas as a traffic calming measure.
- Please describe any new street tree installations within the project areas as trees themselves can stand in as a traffic calming measure. Describe quantities and locations. If there are none; why not?
- Please describe those features that substantiate how the CTDOT plans are designed with consideration for aesthetic elements, including materials, lighting, landscaping, and street furniture. Note that a complete street has aesthetically pleasing surroundings—such as public art, well-maintained landscaping, and human-scale architecture to enhance the experience of using a street and make it a place where people want to be.
- Please describe numerically the curb radii at each crosswalk location in this plan, particularly at Washington and Main Streets.
- Note that NACTO states that Curb radii that are designed to accommodate the largest possible vehicle at its highest possible speed, degrade the pedestrian environment and result in longer crossing distances. They can also create a danger zone for bicyclists that end up in the blind spot of motor vehicles and large trucks. Corner radii directly impact vehicle turning speeds and pedestrian crossing distances. Minimizing the size of a corner radius is critical to creating compact intersections with safe turning speeds for cyclists and pedestrians. While standard curb radii are 10–15 feet, many cities use corner radii as small as 2 feet. (In urban settings, smaller corner radii are preferred and actual corner radii exceeding 15 feet should be the exception.)
- Please substantiate turning speed calculations and how they comply with CTDOT design criteria at the intersections of all three plans.
- NACTO notes that turning speeds should be limited to 15 mph or less. Minimizing turning speeds is crucial to pedestrian safety, as corners are where drivers are most likely to encounter pedestrians crossing in the crosswalk.

I presume the BPTNA Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel Needs Assessment ... - CT.gov

checklist forms are public document. Where can they be found on the CTDOT website? Did the projects fill out this form as required, if not, why not? Will the public be provided an opportunity to discuss the results of the BPTNAs once there has been an opportunity view them?

Observations, questions, comments, suggestions for addressing the needs of, and IMPROVING BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE ARRIGONI BRIDGE APPROACH SPANS.

- The Bicycle Planning Network (PDF) document on the BikePed-Dashboard portrays the bridge as part of a planned trail. Therefore it is very puzzling why CTDOT has not provide for any infrastructure improvements or plans for safer bicycle access on either side of the bridge.
- The Implementation Tier graph shows, as orange, the bridge area on pg 24 of ATP; yet on pg 47 of the ATP appendix the map has the same title, but the map looks different; what map is correct or are they meant to explore 2 different concepts? Most importantly, those maps and the tiering system used to guide build-out of bicycle facilities suggest that the bridge area is high priority or close to highest priority for planning for and accommodating bicyclist safety, yet CTDOT provides no plans for improvements on either side of the bridge.
- Page 25 of the ATP under **trail planning** states that *“Closing the gaps in the trail network continues to be a significant priority of CTDOT.” “CTDOT is particularly committed to closing gaps in the trails of statewide and regional significance.”* This trail is significant and will ultimately be part of a 111 mile loop trail in central CT. It is part of the planned Air Line Trail - Farmington Canal Connector Route, which is made up of a number of sections. The Newfield Corridor Trail is planned, and the Mattabessett and Westlake bike paths have been in use for many years.
- So while the bridge itself does not need to be built, it makes perfect sense to follow published ATP and the DOT Tier guidelines and include much needed infrastructure improvements to this sidewalk/multi-use trail (MUT) at the curb cuts, and merge areas, on both Middletown and Portland side of the bridge.
- For a stand-alone reason—eliminating the MUT connections from consideration—there is no current “preferred local alternative” (a phrase the ATP uses to assess need) to get across the Connecticut River. Thus, it is of paramount importance that bicycling commuters, club riders, and MUT riders all have safe and planned access to the bridge from both the Portland and Middletown sides.
- As mentioned earlier, please provide well designed curb-cuts going onto and coming off the bridge that will accommodate bicyclist and pedestrians sharing this MUT. They need to be wider and accommodate through traffic as well as bicycle traffic getting off at Spring St, bicycle traffic getting on the bridge from N. Main St.; same with the intersections on the Portland “span” side of the bridge.
- At the intersections near-by and on the bridge spans, please provide signage, flashing lights (or something attention grabbing) to gain motorists attention. Please make it safer in the area where the bicyclist needs to **merge** with motor vehicle traffic when getting off and on the sidewalk of the bridge.
- Regarding the maps, The CTDOT needs to propose some revisions or actions to re-establish public facing consistency with stated plans.
- No matter what the traffic count showed of bikes and pedestrians in the design studies, (bikes where included in the traffic counts, yes?) Economic growth in CT, downtown vitality, and use of the bridge to connect two MUT’s will increase use of the bridge.

Observations, questions, comments, suggestions for addressing the needs of, and IMPROVING BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN THE ST. JOHN’S SQUARE AREA, RAPALLO AND GRAND, AND WASHINGTON ST. INTERSECTIONS.

- The need to plan for bicycling infrastructure was addressed by members of the public in the 2018 meetings. Why was no change made to consider bicyclists using the bridge and the roads in the project plans following that meeting?
- I suggest a bike box in St John’s Square area in front of O’Rourke’s that I believe will help with the movement of cyclists heading east-bound over the bridge towards Portland.
- Please create bike lanes, or provide pavement markings or signage—that bikes share the roadway—in the points where the sidewalk ends and bikes must merge with traffic on either side of the bridge.
- The plan needs bicycle infrastructure improvements—at all intersections where work will be done.

- CTDOT should substantiate the dates, locations and times of day when traffic studies were done, and where bicyclists were counted if at all. Please provide the data from traffic studies to the public for review.
- Please explain how do all three projects comply with and complement the CT Bicycle Network Facility Analysis: Priority Tier Classifications (PDF)

The following project numbers are reprinted from CTDOT's web site; Route 9 Middletown "Removal of Traffic Signals on Route 9 and Main Street Improvements". Questions and comments are embedded with GreenText

- **Project 0082-0312** is for the rehabilitation of the Arrigoni Bridge approach spans carrying Routes 17 and 66 in Middletown and Portland. This project will take place simultaneously with the Saint John's Square/Main Street intersection operational improvement project in Middletown. Work on the Arrigoni approach spans consists of replacing the bridge decks, superstructure steel upgrades and repairs as well as substructure repairs to improve the overall structural capacity, reliability and integrity of the bridge. Additionally, a new protective fence system ranging in height from 8 to 12-feet, will also be installed on both the approach and main spans as part of this project. Work on St. John's Square and Main Street consists of the geometric realignment of the intersection to improve safety and operational efficiency, as well as the addition of two turn-lanes.

Additional questions, concerns

- Is this meeting of March 10, 2020, what I believe to be the required public hearing for any and all CTDOT road projects? I believe there is a "new" project combined with the St John's intersection improvement project.
- I know there is some redundancy in asking this question again, but were the BPTNA provisions applied to the "new" project? If so how did CT DOT miss following of ATP guidelines and Tier priorities of CT DOT.
- Why do traffic guard rails always have a smooth edge, in this case on the bridge and the approach spans to protect cars, but the cyclist and pedestrians, get the sharp rough dangerous edges to fall into if a crash occurs between bikes and or bikes and peds?
- Will signage and online notification be provide to bicycle traffic using the bridge, when a sidewalk is closed during construction, so they can the rider know and plan ahead for morning and evening bicycle commutes?
- **Project 0082-0320** is proposed to reduce congestion and improve safety (safety for who, motorists, pedestrians or both? Bicycle usage, safety and infrastructure in St. John's Square and bridge merge area is not addressed at all. This is a shameful oversight.) *at the intersection of St. John's Square and Main Street with the addition of two turn lanes as well as geometric realignment. Hartford Avenue, which becomes Saint John's Square at its intersection with Main Street, operates as an on and off ramp for Route 9. It currently intersects Route 9 at a three-way signalized intersection, providing both northbound and southbound access to and from Main Street. The four-lane cross section of St. John's Square intersects Main Street in a curve, creating a large roadway footprint.*

The proposed work includes the addition of two turn lanes on St. John's Square westbound. Widening will occur on the southbound side in order to incorporate the two new lanes as well as a proposed median island. In addition, geometric improvements will be made to the intersection by way of median islands on Main Street that will serve to normalize the alignment. Rapallo Avenue, which currently consists of one lane in each direction and on-street parking on both sides of the street, will be converted into a one-way street in the westbound direction with limited on-street parking. In anticipation of the reduction of on street parked cars, what traffic calming features are planned? How does making a street one-way and removing parking allow this street to remain a neighborhood with no further consideration of completing the street? What design features are planned to meet the Complete Streets design criteria for this neighborhood? All sense of neighborhood disappears when this becomes a one-way street if current design plans stand as is, and traffic speeds are guaranteed to increase. Grand Street will be widened for the addition of an eastbound turn lane. I do not see this work displayed as happening at this time in the engineer's drawings. When the time comes consider bicycles in the planning. Widening will also occur at the northwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Washington Street to accommodate a dedicated right-turn lane. Please see my discussion of turn radii above. The right-hand turn lane also poses potential dangers for cyclists if not engineered properly.

Additional questions, concerns.

- Along Dekoven Drive Middletown Public Works has installed bike sharrows, specifically to accommodate cyclists wishing to avoid Main St traffic. Making Rapallo Ave. one way changes the option to avoid parts of Main St. depending on what direction the cyclist is travelling.
- Will CTDOT consider a bike lane on Rapallo. Or bikes Share Road signage. Or sharrows or a combination of the above.
- If you think driving a motor vehicle through the Rapallo/Grand intersection is dangerous and difficult, please consider the needs of a bicycle driver navigating that intersection. Will the new plan make it less or more dangerous for a cyclist?
- Will all 3 intersections be a no turn on red intersection? If not, please detail how potential conflicts with motor vehicle are mitigated for bikes and peds.
- Please quantify the safety improvements and their effect at all 3 intersections regarding a.) Pedestrian safety b.) Bicyclists safety and c.) Motor Vehicle safety?
- Please explain what systems of road crossing will be used by pedestrians. Will there be diagonal crossings or not? Will there be no turn on red signage? Exactly what can a pedestrian bicyclist, and motorist expect at the intersections regarding cross walk buttons and timing?
- Bicyclists and sometimes motorcyclists are unnecessarily delayed and put at risk by demand-actuated traffic signals that will not turn green for the cyclist. If they will be in use at any of these

intersections please adhere to Public Roads - Making Signal Systems Work for Cyclists , May/Jun 2008 - FHWA-HRT-08-004

- **Project 0082-0319** is proposed to enhance pedestrian safety and reduce vehicular congestion by constructing sidewalk bump-outs to shorten pedestrian crossing distances along Main Street. I ask again why bicyclist were not considered in any of these plans, or safety accommodations considered? *Main Street is a north-south running four lane arterial with on-street parking on both sides of the road. It is the main arterial for downtown Middletown, providing access for pedestrians (do you consider wheelchair users as pedestrians) cyclists, and vehicles to many restaurants and shops. Due to the on-street parking, current crosswalk distances are between 80 and 96 feet, creating long pedestrian phases which in turn lead to poor vehicular levels of service. This project will construct sidewalk bump-outs to effectively shorten the required crossing distance for pedestrians. A total of 18 bump-outs are proposed that will reduce the pedestrian crossing distances to approximately 55 feet, shortening the pedestrian phase. This will reduce the overall delay experienced at each intersection and improve the level of service. The presence of on street parking reduces the sightlines between a waiting pedestrian and vehicles on Main Street. The bump-outs will relocate the sidewalk ramps even with the end of the parking stalls, improving the visibility for the pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist and increasing safety.*

I look forward to having discussion with CTDOT and Middletown officials on the material I have presented here.

Beth Emery is a CO-Chair of Middletown's Complete Streets Committee, and has served since its inception in 2012. She is a former 8 year member of the Middletown's Planning and Zoning Commission. She served 7 years as a board member of the Jonah Center who has partnered with the Complete Streets Committee to lobby for Multi-Use Trail systems in Middletown and surrounding towns. She can be contacted at ctladycyclist@gmail.com or 860-984-6178.

Ms. Emery states that she is also resenting the Complete Streets Committee and will read their letter into the record.

First, she explains that she learned something at last night's meeting from one of the Connecticut DOT representative with whom she spoke after the meeting, He indicated, which neither she nor Jon Hall knew, noting that Mr. Hall has been working on bicycle transportation routes, that the sidewalk on the Arrigoni Bridge is a sidewalk; therefore, it is unlawful to ride a bike on that sidewalk. We know that people do and are not ticketed. One reason that there is no provision for bicyclists on the sidewalk is for that reason. She apologizes that she was not familiar with that. She does believe that there are creative ways to think about this to ask for improvements to what is happening at the St. John's intersection ND the exit point and on-ramp points of the bridge. Portland is also struggling with some of the same issues. They think that Rapallo Street should remain a 2-way road as far as a complete street. As far as bicycling, it is a designated bicycling way. Closing it to one way traffic would make that route useless and it is, in fact, the first bikeway that they have managed to accomplish as a Complete Streets Committee. It would be frustrating to lose it. It is a way for bikes to get out of Main Street traffic and go an alternate route around town. It is also not 100% clear to her, but it seems there were some conversations about no left hand turns on to Rapallo Avenue. She wants to be certain that cyclists will be allowed to turn on Rapallo Avenue. The next session has to do with signal light timing. There are signal light sensors embedded into the roadway. You can see the little bars in the road. There are many intersections in Middletown that do not have loop sensors located appropriately to notice bicyclists. As a result, bicyclists are waiting and waiting for the traffic light to change

The Chair advises that she has one (1) minute to summarize.

Conn DOT needs to assure that all of what they are putting in will accommodate cyclists. The rest of the points in the letter can be read, adding that she hopes the Councilmembers will consider all of the recommendations that they are making. She is available for questions and will be certain that the mayor gets a copy of this letter. Thank you.

March 11, 2020

Dear Honorable Mayor Ben Florsheim and Members of the Common Council,

The Middletown Complete Streets Committee appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback at this special meeting. We understand there may be an opportunity for some changes to be considered in the CTDOT Rehabilitation of Arrigoni Bridge Approach Spans and Operational Improvements at Saint John's Square / Main Street Intersection in Middletown and Portland; Project 0082-0312 and 0082-0320.

Our suggestions relate to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and road treatments:

- Allow Rapallo Ave to remain a two-way road. Rapallo and DeKoven are already a City designated Bikeway. Closing it to one-way traffic would make that route useless for the biking community as a way to exit Main St. traffic. At the intersection of Main and Rapallo, bicyclists must be allowed to turn left. Any no left turn signage also makes the route useless.
- The exact mechanisms of how the signal light timing will work has not explained. IF loop sensor will be imbedded in the pavement, or some similar system, please require CTDOT to use the systems that will detect bicycles (made of steel, aluminum, carbon and titanium) so that they do not have to wait to move through an intersection until a motor vehicle trips the systems.

- For all active transportation users of the bridge, safety while using the bridge is critical. We contend that the guardrails as they exist now can be quite dangerous to the active transportation users because of the rough sharp metal edges. The guardrail favors motor vehicles with smooth edges on the roads side. What if two wheelchairs meet and unintentionally clash going opposite directions from each other, or if a wheelchair user tries to avoid a pedestrian with a head down walking and talking or listening to music, and veers into the sidewalk guardrail? This is an aesthetic issue as well, and in effect creates a hostile environment for users of the sidewalk.
- There are two right turn lanes at the top of Hartford Ave. that may present safety issues to cyclist and pedestrians. We want to make sure that right turns on red will not be allowed. It must be safe for pedestrians to cross in the cross walk. The burden for the cyclist at this intersection is great. There are 3 points of conflict for the cyclist moving across this part of the intersection, Hartford Rd. traffic, traffic turning rt onto N. Main St, and traffic leaving N. Main to turn right onto the bridge all have to be considered. CTDOT must provide for bicyclist safety in this intersection, such that they can safely take the lane with traffic to cross the bridge, or as a safer solution have road treatments that safely allow them to get to the sidewalk the bridge provides.
- All active transportation users need a safe pathway for merging onto and off of the sidewalks and onto the roadway. For those walking bikes across the bridge, there currently is no logical or big enough space to get off and on a bike without blocking active user traffic. This is true on both the Middletown and Portland side of the bridge. Creative solutions must be considered from a complete street approach--solutions are available and used in many other locations --to make these transition points safe. The bridge is the connection to an expanding multi-use trail networks on both sides of the river that will ultimately connect to a 111-mile loop trail and transportation network in central CT. As part of the ongoing Rt. 66 Corridor Study, the Portland Complete Streets Committee has been working with CTDOT for solutions to this very same issue.
- While the Spring St. side of the bridge in Middletown is not as problematic as the opposite side of the road, the provisions of a wider curb cut size, and signage must be considered for the bicyclist once they have left the sidewalk, so they can safely merge into traffic on Main ST, or turn right onto Spring.
- NACTO is one source of information for finding to solutions to the problems we are addressing.

Thank you-
Sincerely,
Middletown Complete Streets Committee

Carrie Carella: She is the owner of Nora's Cupcakes on the corner of Rapallo and Main. She believes there are many things wrong with this plan and isn't sure that there is anything that we can do to address it. She has worked in the North End for 20 years, first at Eli's Cannon. When she opened Nora's, she looks out the window of her shop, all she sees are people walking from one place to the next because they have created a cool, hip neighborhood. There are no pedestrian walkways conducive to people crossing the street safely. By making Rapallo one way, all the traffic coming to Main Street, that whole block will become this thoroughfare. Even though there is parking, she does not believe that anyone will feel safe parking there because everyone will be turning right quickly. With the lights now, it may not be the best plan, but it allows people down enough to shuffle through safely. Making it faster will make it more difficult. She took over the space on Rapallo that was Rialto Café and Poppy's Restaurant. Her catering division has been working from that space for the past five (5) years with the intention of opening that space as a bar or restaurant. With this project, she now has no intention of doing that. It diminishes and deflates this motivation of starting businesses and creating more jobs in the North End where it has been difficult to do over the past couple of years. It has sealed the deal not to move forward with this plan especially with a ramp being right on Rapallo.

Nur Fitzpatrick (Green Street): She lives in the North End, across from the Green Street Arts Center. She received the notice today and, looking around, she does not see other North End residents. She is nervous as she is not a public speaker. She is a native of Patterson, NJ. A lot is happening in the City, noting that the North End is a unique place with a rich history, with good people, many living in poverty, low income, and in a food desert. This project will debilitate the neighborhood even more. Ferry Street and Green Street are both one way streets and people speed down both regularly. She has bought a sign "Children at Play." These are some issues that will increase and hurt their neighborhood. She will not pretend to know about sustainability or eco-friendly stuff, but she could bring Wesleyan students here and they can tell the Council that more cars are going to damage our health. She adds that we all know the Covid virus now; it is rampant. She does not want to hear, in 10 years, when this project is up and running, that our children are sick. She does not know how many on the Council live on Green Street or Ferry Street, or Rapallo Street, but she has lived on Green Street for nine (9) years. The City doesn't clean their streets. The neighborhood is going downhill, but we have money to put into highways and bring other people convenience. She looks forward to meeting the Councilmembers she has not yet met.

The Chair asks if anyone else wishes to speak. Not seeing any other members of the public looking to speak, he closes the public hearing at 6:15 PM.

Beth Emery steps to the podium.

Beth Emery: She states that she found the paper that addresses the comments that she made earlier about Portland. Portland is not working with Conn DOT . . .

The Chair states (*inaudible*)

Beth Emery replies that she thought that he gave her permission to speak, which is why she spoke.

The Chair replies (*inaudible*) "one time."

Keith Emery: He owns several properties in Middletown. The one property most affected by this project is 725 Main Street, the Trolley Barn. For the most part, he does not think that this project will have a terrible, negative impact on them personally or on their properties or on their tenants. He does think that other components will have a negative impact on the character and quality of the City, in particular, the removal of the crosswalks. He walks the City, noting that everywhere else he drives, running errands, He walks them here, which is unique about this City and which this project will take away from the people who live and work here. This is something that we should look at and see if we can keep the walkability of the City. There could be an overpass, which he knows is expensive. It is a fight to keep the character of this community. He does think that the State cares, especially after last night's meeting where they said that they sign the check and that they are ready to go, to do it. He does not know if there is a way to tap the brakes on it. The first he heard about this project was about a month ago. In every other jurisdiction where he has properties, when someone is going to demolish a house or take down a tree, you get letters and emails. He reiterates that he heard nothing about this project, which will dramatically affect this City. He thinks that we should tap the brakes, if we can, and look at some of the negative impacts this will have on our community. It was mentioned last night that no one complained about the bridgework or the key structural things that need to be done. What is the impact going to be? The Rapallo Avenue impact, turning that into a one street. He is not sure that this project is work losing even a couple of businesses and making the City less walkable, a little less accessible for everyone, who is here, He will do what he can on his end with his legislator to tap the brakes. It is Federally funded. There may be Congressmen and Senators who have some control over this. He reiterates that we should tap the brakes and determine if this is the right thing for Middletown. How can we make it a great thing for Middletown? It is a good thing in the State's mind, but he asks if it is great thing in the City's mind as well. He has been fairly open that he is willing to do whatever he can to improve the quality of the North End adding that he is still doing whatever he can in that regard. As he said in the beginning, this project does not dramatically, negatively impact him personally other than the loss of walkability; however, others have said that it does negatively impact them.

3. Public Comment Closes

The Chair asks if anyone else from the public wishes to speak. Not seeing any other members of the public looking to speak, he closes the public hearing at 6:21 PM.

4. Presentation By, and Discussion With, Mayor Benjamin Florsheim and Connecticut State Department of Transportation RE: Arrigoni Bridge Project to Commence Spring, 2020

The Chair invites Mayor Benjamin Florsheim to the podium to present to the Council.

Mayor Florsheim thanks the Council for taking the time to be here tonight and to those who attended the Department of Transportation (DOT) presentation at McDonough School last night. His hope is to clarify any questions of Councilmembers as to how we arrived at this juncture. This is something that he has learned over the past few weeks, including that construction was slated to begin shortly to his surprise and to the surprise of others in this administration. They have had conversation with Transportation as to how that transpired as they read about the work start date in the Middletown Press before hearing about it. DOT has acknowledged some breakdown of communication on their part and have acknowledged that no formal authorization was given by the City for the conversion of Rapallo Road from a 2-way to a 1-way street. He wants to use this opportunity to answer Councilmember questions as to how we have gotten to where we are. You have all been given a packet of correspondence between DOT and the City of Middletown about this project prior to this administration taking office. He notes that many of the Councilmembers were present for the DOT presentation in this Chamber a few weeks ago when they talked about the public outreach about this project, and how, in the minds of many people, the changes proposed for St. John's Square were interpreted by many in the public in Middletown as not part of an independent St. John's Square project, but part of the Route 9 signal removal project. This misunderstanding and surprise originated from this. One goal is to answer Councilmembers' questions about how we got to where we are. The second goal is to hear feedback from Councilmembers about last night's community forum and about Rapallo Avenue. As he mentioned, no decisions were made by the prior administration or the present administration about whether it would be wise or prudent for DOT to go forward with this project, turning Rapallo Avenue into a 1-way street, or tell them to change the contract and keep it as a 2-way street. His conversations with DOT have been that they did not get the authorization and the City's studies, engineering, and projections show that it would be better as a 2-way street. He spoke with many last night and to many of the Councilmembers and we have heard from residents, some of whom are here tonight, who disagree with that converting Rapallo into a 1-way street. DOT denies that this is the case, but this is a backdoor way to put a flyway ramp over Rapallo Avenue. They have acknowledged that this would be needed if they go through with the flyover project. They have also repeatedly emphasized that this flyover proposal is something that they are – to use their words – are going back to the drawing board on and will be meeting with the public regarding the Route 9 signal removal. There are lots of questions and concerns about Rapallo, which is something he wants to have a conversation about with the Councilmembers here. Lastly, going forward, this is an opportunity for us to have – at least to begin – a conversation about pedestrian and cyclists improvements in the North End and downtown. He heard last night, and has heard from Councilmembers and other members of the public over the past week, a lot of the complaints about this

project, which he believes has something to do with Middletown feeling like it has been walked all over by DOT in the past and that this is just an extension of that behavior. He has also heard complaints about decisions that the City has made in the past, and not made in the past, is to traffic calming in the North End, cyclist and pedestrian safety in the downtown, insufficient parking for business owners and residents downtown. He thinks that is important, as they have this conversation about transportation policy in the City, in what ways we will make these decisions ourselves as a City, and that the Council will make as a legislative body, to advance pedestrian safety, to advance 21st century infrastructure independently of anything that the State DOT is doing and how we can give feedback as to overall transportation infrastructure in the City and make sure, independently of this project and moving forward we are doing what we can to make the appropriate adaptations in our neighborhoods to make this a safer, more walkable community. These are his goals for this evening, noting that there may be other than other people would like to share. He turns the meeting over to Councilmembers, if they have any questions about anything that he has talked about.

The Chair states that, as this time, he will be calling on Councilmembers to take an opportunity to ask questions. He also wants to alert everyone that this meeting, which started at 5:30 PM, ends at 6:30 PM, or we do have a time limit, which we must be mindful of. The Chair calls on Councilman Philip Pessina.

Councilman Philip Pessina thanks the Mayor for including the legislative body in this very important decision. He states that he has heard that Rapallo Avenue was originally part of the flyover, which failed at the City level and at the DOT level. He asks Mayor Florsheim if this is correct; that we will have control, noting that a lot of residents have talked to him about that. Secondly, he thinks that the Mayor is right on target with a walkable Main Street. We need that crosswalk back for our culture. He notes that, for the many years that he worked on Main Street and worked with the Chamber and the various businesses, they need it. He is glad to hear that the Mayor is going to stress that.

The Mayor speaks to the first question. Rapallo Avenue was the site for the flyover off ramp, which was to be constructed as part of the Route 9 signal removal project. That was, depending in how you count it, what he believes was the third proposal from DOT to the City of Middletown was made after a different proposal for a larger flyover near deKoven Drive farther south. It was rejected by the community. They have heard our feedback on the flyover as well, which is why, working on this traffic study referenced last night, undertaking a traffic study to look at the origins and destinations of vehicles that use Route 9 as well as traffic throughout Middletown. What they have told us is that they have completed the data gathering portion of that study and are crunching the numbers, getting it ready to present. They did this because of the feedback on the flyover project and have said that they intend to go back to the drawing board and come up with an alternative proposal for Route 9. To answer the first part of the question, it is our jurisdiction to decide, as part of this project, if Rapallo remains a 2-way street or becomes a 1-way street. With respect to the crosswalk, this is one of the tough conversations that does need to be had internally and with the State. He does want to clarify that, to his understanding, the State will not remove any crosswalk, adding that the crosswalk that was removed was as a result of the bump out installations as an earlier part of DOT. The justification that was given last evening by DOT is that the crosswalk was not signalized, and they view non-signalized crosswalks on State roads as dangerous for pedestrians. They have been pretty clear that they do not intend on putting that back. He notes that it is an unfortunate thing and it gives us all the more reason that we need to start looking at how we can provide better signage; how we can provide other civil engineering solutions to safer crossing areas in that section of Main Street. We should keep looking at it, adding that he does not want anyone to leave this meeting thinking that is something that we are likely to get back anytime soon. At the same time, it needs to prompt us to look for solutions for walkability downtown.



Office of the
Commissioner

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546



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August 10, 2018

The Honorable Daniel T. Drew
Mayor
City of Middletown
245 DeKoven Drive
Middletown, Connecticut 06457

RECEIVED
2018 AUG 23 PM 3:03
CITY OF MIDDLETOWN
MAYOR'S OFFICE

Dear Mayor Drew:

Subject: Project No. 82-312
Federal-Aid Project No. 0066(112)
Phase 2 Rehabilitation of the Arrigoni Bridge
City of Middletown and Town of Portland

Thank you for your letter dated July 5, 2018 requesting the inclusion of suicide prevention measures in the Arrigoni Bridge deck replacement project. I was pleased to meet with you on August 1, 2018 with Deputy Commissioner Barry, other Department of Transportation (Department) representatives, and your emergency response coordinators to discuss measures that the Department and City could employ together to help curb suicide attempts from the bridge.

The Department agreed, as an initial measure, to fabricate six suicide prevention call signs that could be installed by the city of Middletown and the town of Portland on the ends and middle of the two bridge sidewalks. The sign installation would be achieved through a standard encroachment permit process to be undertaken by both municipalities. As discussed, the Department's engineering personnel would provide advice for proper sign installation, as needed. The exact wording on the sign panels would be determined through coordinated input from both municipalities and the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board. It would be expected that the Middletown and Portland municipalities would assume responsibility for sign maintenance.

The Department agreed, as a subsequent measure, to the installation of an 8 foot high protective fence on both of the bridge sidewalk railings for the entire length of the bridge. The proposed protective fence type may be similar to one of the two types of protective fencing installed on the New York Thruway Authority's Tapanzee Bridge over the Hudson River, such as the thin wire mesh or the non-climbable wire fencing. The sidewalk protective fence installation would be included in the subject Arrigoni Bridge rehabilitation project, slated for construction advertising in the spring of 2019 with anticipated construction completion in the fall of 2021.

The Honorable Daniel T. Drew

-2-

August 10, 2018

The Department thanks you for your cooperation and positive input in the project. We are committed to assisting in the implementation of immediate and subsequent suicide prevention measures that can be effectively employed.

Should you have any questions, please contact Mr. Scott A. Hill, Engineering Administrator, at (860) 594-3150.

Sincerely,


James Redeker
Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Susan S. Bransfield, First Selectman, Town of Portland
Mr. Larry McHugh, President, Middlesex Chamber of Commerce



Office of the
Commissioner

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546



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August 4, 2017

The Honorable Daniel T. Drew
Mayor
City of Middletown
245 DeKoven Drive
Middletown, Connecticut 06457

Dear Mayor Drew:

Subject: Project No. 82-312
Federal-Aid Project No. 0066(112)
Phase 2 Rehabilitation of Arrigoni Bridge
City of Middletown and Town of Portland

Thank you for your letter dated July 7, 2017 requesting lighting and safety measures to prevent suicide attempts on the Arrigoni Bridge and for your kind words about the Department of Transportation's (Department) engineering team. The Department appreciates your concern for public safety and will work with you accordingly. Your letter shows a need to look at appropriate mitigations for the bridge.

The Department recently met with the CT Suicide Advisory Board (CTSAB) and discussed factors relating to suicide from bridges. They plan on reaching out to the city about the issue on the Arrigoni Bridge. The Department plans to work with them to identify the best measures to address the situation. I hope that the Department, the Board, the Town of Portland and the City of Middletown can build an effective partnership on this issue.

In regard to the reconstruction of the bridge, current design standards provided in Federal and State statutes and the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials specifications do not provide warrants or criteria for the installation of protective barriers on bridges. However, the Department will expand the scope of the Arrigoni Bridge approach reconstruction project to include safety measures that would help to reduce suicide attempts from the bridge.

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The Honorable Daniel T. Drew

-2-

August 4, 2017

The Department is thankful for your cooperation and positive input in the project and will keep you informed concerning the progress of the additional project study and the partnership on other solutions.

Should you have any questions, please contact Mr. Scott A. Hill, Engineering Administrator, at (860) 594-3150.

Sincerely,

James Redeker
Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Susan Bransfield, First Selectman, Town of Portland
Mr. Larry McHugh, President, Middlesex Chamber of Commerce



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2800 BERLIN TURNPIKE, P.O. BOX 317546
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06131-7546

Phone: 860-594-3189

April 16, 2018



RECEIVED
2018 APR 20 PM 2:32
CITY OF MIDDLETOWN
MAYOR'S OFFICE

The Honorable Daniel T. Drew
Mayor
City of Middletown
245 deKoven Drive
Middletown, Connecticut 06043

Dear Mayor Drew:

Subject: State Project No. 0082-0318 Removal of Traffic Signals on Route 9
State Project No. 0082-0319 Sidewalk Bump-outs on Main Street
State Project No. 0082-0320 Saint John's Square and Main Street
Intersection Improvements
City of Middletown

A public informational meeting for the above referenced projects was held on March 22, 2018 at the Middletown High School Auditorium, 200 La Rosa Lane, Middletown, Connecticut. The purpose of the projects is to remove the traffic signals on Route 9, reduce congestion, and improve safety along Main Street for vehicles and pedestrians. A presentation was given in July of 2016 regarding these projects as well. This presentation outlined the progression of the project since that meeting, noting the alternatives that were investigated. The following improvements are proposed:

0082-0318 Removal of Traffic Signals on Route 9

- The proposed design will eliminate the left-turning movements from Route 9 northbound onto Hartford Avenue in order to reduce conflict points and remove signalization. An at-grade exit lane will be provided for southbound Route 9 traffic in order to maintain access to Hartford Avenue. Access from Hartford Avenue to Route 9 northbound will be maintained by constructing a bridge to convey Route 9 southbound over the on-ramp from Hartford Avenue. Route 9 southbound will be accessible from Hartford Avenue with a right turn free-flow acceleration lane.
- A bridge will be constructed to convey northbound vehicles over Route 9 southbound as well as the railroad tracks and yard. The off-ramp will intersect the north side of Rapallo Avenue at a stop-controlled intersection.
- The proposed design will eliminate the Route 9 northbound and southbound access to Washington Street to reduce conflict points. Access to Route 9 southbound from Washington Street will be maintained with an at-grade acceleration lane. Additionally, the lane configuration on Washington Street will be modified to provide a dedicated left-turn lane onto deKoven Drive.

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The Honorable Daniel T. Drew

-2-

April 16, 2018

- The Miller Street neighborhood, which currently is only accessible via direct access from Route 9 southbound, will be reconnected to the downtown area by reopening the railroad crossing on Portland Street.

0082-0319 Sidewalk Bump-outs on Main Street

- This project is proposed to enhance pedestrian safety and reduce vehicular congestion by constructing sidewalk bump-outs to shorten pedestrian crossing distances along Main Street.

0082-0320 Saint John's Square and Main Street Intersection Improvements

- The proposed work includes the addition of two turn lanes on Saint John's Square westbound. Widening will occur on the south side, opposite St. John Church, in order to incorporate the two new lanes, as well as a proposed median island. In addition, geometric improvements will be made to the intersection by way of median islands on Main Street that will serve to normalize the alignment.
- Rapallo Avenue, which currently consists of one lane in each direction and on-street parking on both sides of the street, will be converted into a one-way street in the westbound direction.
- Grand Street will be widened for the addition of an eastbound turn lane. The signalization will be modified to provide exclusive side street phases to remove conflicting movements with Rapallo Avenue.
- Widening will also occur at the northwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Washington Street to accommodate a dedicated right-turn lane which will be marked for shared use by bicyclists.

Rights of Way/Property Acquisitions

The following is the anticipated property acquisitions associated with proposed improvements.

0082-0318 – Removal of Traffic Signals on Route 9

- The proposed Route 9 northbound off-ramp will require the total acquisition of three commercial properties and relocation of the three businesses.

0082-0319 – Sidewalk Bump-outs on Main Street

- All construction activities will take place within the State or City right of way.

0082-0320 – Saint John's Square and Main Street Improvement

- The widening at Main Street, Washington Street and Grand Street will require sliver acquisitions of four properties. Temporary rights and/or easements may be pursued for the reconstruction of driveways on private property.

Construction Cost

The estimated cost of all three projects is \$71 million and will use eighty percent (80%) Federal funds and twenty percent (20%) State funds. The construction breakdowns for each project are as follows;

0082-0318 – Removal of Traffic Signals on Route 9	\$65,000,000
0082-0319 – Sidewalk Bump-outs on Main Street	\$ 2,500,000
0082-0320 – Saint John's Square and Main Street Improvement	\$ 3,250,000

The Honorable Daniel T. Drew

-3-

April 16, 2018

Construction Schedule

The following is the anticipated construction schedule for work associated with proposed improvements.

- 0082-0319 Sidewalk Bump-outs on Main Street
 - o Start: Spring 2019
 - o End: Fall 2019
- 0082-0320 Saint John's Square and Main Street Intersection Improvements
 - o Start: Summer 2019
 - o End: Fall 2020
- 0082-0318 Removal of Traffic Signals on Route 9
 - o Start: Spring 2020
 - o End: Fall 2022

Public Informational Meeting Transactions

There were approximately 225 public attendees present, including elected state and local officials.

Approximately half of the public attendees present also attended the Public Informational Meeting held in July 2016.

The following comments and responses were made at the meeting:

- A few attendees acknowledged that the plan was better than the one proposed by the Department in July of 2016. However, they expressed concern that current plan still adds volume to Route 66 along with additional traffic to Rapallo Avenue with the proposed off-ramp. Some attendees expressed concern regarding the effect the increased traffic would have on the safety of pedestrians. The Department explained that the proposed work on Route 66 and Main Street would greatly improve the operations for vehicles and pedestrians. The sidewalk bump-outs will serve to provide pedestrian visibility and reduce the required pedestrian crossing phase, which would give more green time to Main Street. Despite this, many attendees questioned whether the operations would improve with added volume.
- Numerous attendees expressed concerns with the location of the Route 9 northbound access to the City at Rapallo Avenue. Business owners felt that the added volume would have a negative impact on their business. Many residents expressed concerns that the proposed plan would increase cut-through traffic, despite the fact that the plan will improve the efficiency of Route 66 and Main Street. The most common comment regarding the northbound off-ramp to Rapallo Avenue was that it would have negative impacts to the north end community as a whole.
- The proposal to close the Miller Street access to Route 9 by improving the existing at grade rail crossing on Portland Street to handle daily traffic was well received. Many attendees asked if that part of the project could be constructed separately from the rest of the work. The Department is investigating the possibility of expediting this portion of the design.

The Honorable Daniel T. Drew

-4-

April 16, 2018

- Some attendees expressed concern that the proposed bump-outs would not accommodate turning truck movements. The Department explained that they were designed to take up unused space at each corner, maintaining the turning movements that exist today.
- State Rep. Matthew Lesser asked about the path moving forward regarding these projects. The Department explained that all comments will be taken into consideration and a meeting with the City will take place in determining if the projects should proceed forward as proposed.

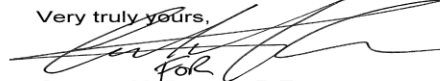
Comment Period and Determinations

A two-week comment period was held subsequent to the meeting. Over this time, approximately thirty-one (31) comments were received. While many echoed concerns expressed at the meeting, many comments also expressed support for the proposed projects. Numerous attendees supported opening access to Miller Street by improving the at-grade rail crossing and closing the direct access to Route 9. The proposed Sidewalk Bump-outs on Main Street received minimal comments beyond concerns regarding truck turning movements. The comments on improvements to Saint John's Square and Main Street focused on the additional traffic on Rapallo Avenue and Grand Street due to the proposed Route 9 northbound off-ramp location.

The Department will continue to explore other viable alternatives to address the concerns raised at the two public informational meetings and comment periods regarding the removal of the traffic signals on Route 9 while maintaining adequate access to and from the City. Based on feedback during the public outreach process, the Department will move forward with finalizing the design of the two projects along Main Street (0082-0319 and 0082-0320). The Department will also investigate improving the Miller Street access as part of the Saint John's Square project.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact Mr. Erik A. Jarboe, Project Manager, at (860) 594-3299.

Very truly yours,



Gregory M. Dorosh, P.E.
Transportation Division Chief
Bureau of Engineering and Construction

cc: The Honorable Susan Bransfield – First Selectwoman, Town of Portland
The Honorable Lizz Milardo – First Selectwoman, Town of Haddam
Ms. Amy D. Jackson-Grove – Division Administrator, FHWA
Mr. Larry McHugh – President, Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Diane Gervais – Chairperson, Downtown Business District
Mr. John Hall – Chairman, Middletown Complete Street Committee
Mr. Anthony J. Salvatore – Town Manager, Town of Cromwell
Mr. Samuel S. Gold – Executive Director, Lower CT River Valley Council of Governments

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon states that he has a legal question, noting that perhaps General Counsel Brig Smith can help with this. First, he thanks the DOT for providing the documents requested at last night's meeting, although they arrived late today. He was able to confirm that the last administration did approve the general plan. His question is, in general, is there anything a City can do when the State comes in and makes changes that are not approved and, in the terms of the contract, have made a mistake.

Attorney Smith replies that, as Councilman Nocera knows, the answer to any legal question is, "It depends." He adds that (*inaudible*) teaches occasionally so (*inaudible*). The more specific answer is "Not really." As a general matter, locals are creatures of the State. The State giveth and the State taketh away. As a Constitutional matter, for Connecticut and across the country, States could really abolish local governments, adding that we are administrative conveniences as a Constitutional matter. As a practical matter, that is not going to work, but it does mean that in Connecticut, and all States, you have to find a grant of power in the State Constitution and within the statutes. In Connecticut – he notes that he is "building the watch" and will tell them the time – we often refer to ourselves as a "home rule" State. . We are not actually. We are a Dillon's Rule State. A home rule State, which is the majority of States in the country say that, unless the State prohibits you from doing something as a local, you can do that. In Connecticut, it is the opposite: unless you can find something permitting you to do something, you cannot do it. That's the starting proposition. Now, from that, especially with respect to State highways, public highways, public transportation, our rights are very limited. In a nutshell, what the State is doing with respect to Route 9, Route 66, Route 17 – any other route that people mistake often for City of Middletown streets, they can largely do what they want. As you have all noted and talked about, the leverage that the City has, the power that the City has, is Rapallo and the City's ownership of that. The second part of the question, noting that he would have to look at the contract documents to see what hook there is. His supposition, his understanding is that the State is willing to work with the City at least in some regards. If you told me that push would have to come to shove, he would have to look to see how far shove would go, adding that he has not done that, but could certainly do that.

Councilman McKeon states that, from his perspective, he would like Attorney Smith to do that. He is not a lawyer, but done some reading with the State statutes, a few citations, noting that he may be complexly wrong, adding that Attorney Smith and Vinny (no last name) have reviewed some of these. He reads, citing Chapter 237, Section 13a-57a:

Sec. 13a-57a. Consultation with municipal officers in planning of highway within municipality. Whenever the Commissioner of Transportation is engaged in the planning of any limited access highway (which he knows this isn't), interchange (which it may very well be) or connector to be located within the limits of any town, city or borough . . . (the Commissioner) shall . . . , to the fullest extent possible, (consult) with the chief executive officer and the planning commission, . . .

Councilman McKeon asks if that is something that we can hang our hat on or (*inaudible*).

Attorney Smith replies that we can hang something on it. Here's the trick: it is "to the extent possible" so that have thought about this carefully. Looking at the second part of that clause, it is about environmental impact and, so, his read of that is that it is focused on the extent to which you have an environmental impact.

Councilman McKeon interjects that it's the environment, not environmental impact so he interprets it to be the environment of the municipality.

Attorney Smith replies that it is an argument that we could make.

Councilman McKeon replies that he has other questions, but will defer to his colleagues. Thank you.

The Chair calls on Councilman Eugene Nocera.

Councilman Nocera states that, at last night's meeting, he thanked the State and the residents for all their involvement, noting that the State has done a remarkable job putting the plan together. We have some concerns that we want to address with the, AT the beginning of the State's prevention, it was clear that the door was open because they said that, if elected officials come to them with representatives of the community, they will sit down and discuss concerns. That was what we heard. Firstly, what he heard last night and his own observations of the project, he has four (4) areas that he feels need to be addressed with the State. First is Rapallo Avenue. , which we have talked about. Second is parking, which is at a premium in our community, adding that he does not believe that the State understands the magnitude of this issue in Middletown at this point. The State developed these plans without researching well. We understand that, but they do not have a real sense that every space is important. This is a sidebar issue, but he feels that it is important to investigate: perhaps a speed bump or other ways to mitigate speed on our side streets because people are cutting thru to avoid Main Street. That is not the State's issue, per se, noting that it could be, but we need to look at that. He reiterates that it is an issue. The other issue that he believes needs to be addressed is the Complete Streets piece, The Airline Trail ends not too far from the Arrigoni Bridge. Portland has completed the Airline Trail and Middletown is about to embark on the multi-use trail within the next two (2) to three (3) years through the Parks grant. To him, the multi-use trail is synonymous with Complete Streets because (*inaudible*). It was not something that was really addressed in this project at all. We do not want to miss this opportunity to do it right. Finally, he personally feels that it is important that we leave tonight with the goal of establishing a committee of Councilmanic representatives, community representatives and Complete Streets to take our priority concerns to the State to discuss.

The Chair asks the Mayor if he has any reaction.

Mayor Florsheim replies that he is inclined to agree with everything that Councilman Nocera said. He does think that the State probably has not given a lot of thought to the impact of a project like this on things like parking. He also thinks that, like making sure that we are taking appropriate speed reduction measures on our local roads, for better or for worse, supplying parking in downtown Middletown is not the job of the State Department of Transportation; rather, it is our job. He thinks that we are now in a position where this project, again, for better or for worse, is prompting a long overdue conversation that he knows many of us have heard about from members of the policy: the state of transportation infrastructure in Middletown. He notes that Councilman Nocera mentioned the Complete Streets Committee, which has done unique work putting together a vision for a better transportation infrastructure in this City. Mayor Florsheim notes that Councilman Nocera mentioned the possibility of a Councilmanic committee to manage transportation needs. Many of the Councilmembers know that the administration has been working to restructure the Parking Department and the Planning, Conservation & Development Department to have a stronger emphasis on transportation infrastructure. There are City staff, adding that he can certainly speak for himself, the Mayor's Office, who would be eager to work with the Council on a plan for implementing some of the strategies, some of the proposals from the Complete Streets Committee as well as other transportation investments that the City needs to make. He believes that, as much as we would like to not have the State cause more problems for us, which to some extent they are doing with this project, we also cannot expect them to solve all of our problems. By having a more robust conversation about transportation infrastructure in downtown Middletown and the City at large, we will put ourselves, going forward, in a better position to work with the State just a bit more collaboratively and a little less (*inaudible*) than the situation we find ourselves in today.

The Chair calls on Councilman Grady Faulkner, Jr.

Councilman Faulkner asks if there were any safety analyses done on this project to give us a picture of safety today and safety after the project.

Mayor Florsheim asks if that is in terms of crashes.

Councilman Faulkner replies, crashes, pedestrians, noting that there are people walking and a school in that area. He asks if there has been a business analysis as to what we will lose by separating the City of Middletown

Mayor Florsheim replies that he does not want to speak for the DOT. He knows that they do crash analysis as part of the design phase of these projects. He does not believe that they do commercial impact, noting that he believes that that is left to the local government, in this case, to the Chamber of Commerce.

Councilman Faulkner states that he believes that years ago in dealing with the bridge area, we had some funs to mitigate construction time and closing and the effect on business. He believes that it was "It's Only Natural" that was looking at moving out because their customers were mostly from out of town, coming in to Middletown. These are some of the considerations that he questions. If it going to make it less safe . . . he asks what about our local traffic department and public safety, asking if they have weighed in on this.

Mayor Florsheim replies that this was one of the problems with communication with FOT that they have encountered. He thinks that Councilman Faulkner is referring to the last round of Arrigoni Bridge work when they replaced the decking on the main span of the bridge. That was a project that DOT worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce to disseminate information to the business community and the public as to when lanes would be closed, what they could expect the traffic impact to be on the businesses. That was the channel through which the Public Safety personnel were able to work with DOT. For instance, we have a firehouse on Main Street, so there were discussion as to how accommodations would be made so emergency vehicles could get in and out even during construction, DOT because the Chamber played that role last time, again played that role this time to help facilitate that same process. The problem was that they did not do it in quite the same way. From his understanding, from what he has been told by people who lived thru both projects, earlier there were meetings with public safety personnel back in 2011-2012. There was more proactive outreach on the front end so that there was a collaborative, more communication. Information was announced to City officials before it was announced in a press release. He acknowledges that these were communications problems on their end, but he also thinks that a lot of the communication issues were because of information lost in the transition from one administration to the other. He believes that his purpose of a committee, like the one established with the Chamber, is to be sure that everyone is up to speed and on the same page, especially after a new administration has come into elected office. At this point, we are in a pace where we are getting more productive communication from DOT after we expressed to them in pretty clear terms that we were frustrated. They have, in turn, helped by providing documents that you will have, to show us what the paper trail was with the previous administration and the assumptions they were operating under. The answer to your question: the public safety personnel, the business community has not been informed as they have been, as they have been, as they deserve to be, adding that they are working on making sure that those voices have been heard. The pre-construction meeting that they had at the district office for DOT – fire, police, public safety representatives – we are working with the Chamber working group to make sure that his information is being properly communicated thru these channels.

Councilman Faulkner states that he is surprised that the Chamber is not involved because they were really concerned about it.

Mayor Florsheim states that, to clarify, the Chamber is involved in it; they are running the working group for this project.

Councilman Faulkner reiterates that he is still surprised.

Mayor Florsheim states that the meeting was convened for purposes of the Council.

Councilman Faulkner states that, he went to the CCM (Connecticut Conference of Municipalities) large cities' committee meeting, and was surprised that Middletown did not participate in that group. He is hoping that, going forward, we will try to do that because they actually call in people like DOT to talk about issues and we can hear about what they up to earlier. Lastly, he is surprised by the amount of information that is dated back to 2016, 2018. He notes that he did not hear about this material, adding that while he knew that the bridge was to be done, he did not know about the other parts. It is surprising to him. He does not know how far down the road they are with this project, noting that it sounds like things are, perhaps with the exception of Rapallo Avenue. He would at least ask about the safety analysis and the business analysis.

The Chair calls on Councilman Edward McKeon.

Councilman McKeon states that the Mayor is much kinder about the communication ability of the Department of Education than he is. He is appalled – he corrects his reference, noting that it is the department of Transportation. He is appalled at the lack of preparedness, adding that they had not done any pedestrian studies. They also have not completed their point-to-point study, but are beginning work. They have had our (4) after-the-fact meetings so they obviously have some concern about how this is being received. We probably know, adding that he knows, that there are hundreds of residents, who are really dissatisfied not only with the information that has been provided, but the action that is being taken, He thinks that behooves the Council, as a committee, that we have a meeting with the Commissioner of Transportation. He adds that he is surprised that State representatives are not here alongside us complaining about this, noting that they have appeared at some of the meetings, but that he has not heard anything as to how they will help the City. He believes that the Council must insist that they help us. In the strongest term, we have to go back and say that what they are doing is an injustice to them merchants, to the residents. It has racial and justice impacts. We are going through the poorest section of Middletown with this project and, once again, dumping the problems of people who don't even live in this City. This change, this convenience for all the people who are passing by the City, adding that he is not directing this at the Mayor as he knows, but adding that he wants everyone to know and for it to be on the record: what they are doing is immoral. They are hurting the City financially. They are increasing the speed of traffic in the City. They are endangering pedestrians by these plans. He states that, in the strongest terms, we should do whatever we can, including refusing to allow Rapallo Avenue to be a one-way street, and anything else that we can pursue to stall their work. The shovels are almost in the ground if not in the ground already. That is apparent. We can establish a committee, but they are already at work, so personally, he does not believe that it should be establishing a committee and talking about this for two (2) months and make a compromise. He believes that we should be saying, 'Stop, stop working on this until we can talk,' adding that maybe we can negotiate, but stop.

The Chair calls on Councilman Anthony Gennaro.

Councilman Gennaro states that he knows that they are on borrowed time, so he will be brief. He states that, whatever we go from here, it is very important that we set up with the community, with the people in that area, a way to reach out to us as easily as possible so that we can relay their concerns directly to DOT when they are working on the site, whether it is getting into their businesses with enough officers on site to direct traffic in and out and ensuring that people are not turned away from these businesses. What we need to concentrate on is the people in that area and their needs.

Mayor Florsheim replies that he is in agreement that this is the intent of the Bridge Committee that the chamber has been running: to make sure that there is adequate information between the City and DOT. He states that he will do everything he can to be sure that the Council is informed about how they can be engaged in this process as well.

Councilman Gennaro replies that he thinks that we need to do this as soon as possible so that they are not faced with a stressful time when people are wonder whom they need to call. We need to get that information out there so that, if there is an issue, they have a contact, whether it is to email a concern with a point person to get back to them quickly. We do not want anyone to feel that they are not being heard.

Mayor Florsheim replies that what they will do, and as people at the meeting yesterday heard, on the project website, which is being run by the State, he will be sure that the links for that website, which includes slides from the presentation as well as contact forms for feedback and questions, are also in the City website, on his Facebook page, and on the City Facebook page. If there are other requests that we can accommodate, we will do so.

Councilman Gennaro replies that definitely something like that makes sense based on his personal experiences down there, explaining that he has responded to many accidents in that area. There are some good things but we need to be sure that they are implemented correctly so there is no negative effect.

Mayor Florsheim concurs, adding that, as Councilman McKeon mentioned, we don't hold a lot of cards, but we hold one: Rapallo Avenue. He adds that we have a whole other deck of cards over here and can start playing with in the City to try to address a lot of the concerns which have legitimately been raised. He believes that the message he has gotten from DOT, which is a daily decision as whether we use honey or vinegar on any day as we engage with our partners at the State. The understanding that he has from DOT is that, for projects of this nature, their policy is to deal exclusively with the first elected official in any given City or Town. He adds that, not having worked in State government but, rather, in and Federal government, that needs to be the typical policy for partnering on these projects. The decision about involvement of City departments and the public beyond statutory requirements, public hearings, and involvement of the legislative branch is made about that information is made by the chief elected official of the City. It has always been his intent to work as effectively with the Council, and as openly and transparently with the council, as he possibly can. He thinks that is the number one to address what Councilman Gennaro has said about disseminating information to the public as effectively as possible, especially if people ask Councilmembers as much as they ask him about the status of projects. Number two, he believes that it is important that there be a legislative element as to how they consider these projects even though, by statute, it is the chief elected official, who is working with the State to coordinate on these things. He believes that, as this moves forward, this will continue to be his standard operating procedure: that he will involve the Council as much as possible on these decisions, noting that is why he wanted to be here tonight, to hear their thoughts on Rapallo, as this will ultimately be a conversation that he has with DOT to decide what to do with that. He adds that he has noticed and understands what Councilmembers are saying about the State's communication skills. He was as frustrated as anyone when he was reading in the paper that they were going to start work. He has noticed a marked shift in their tone especially after an article in the *Wesleyan Argus* ruffled a few feathers up there. He thinks that they have heard the message about the City's concerns and that they understand that they need to work with the City on the Rapallo element as well as any future Route 9 project. He thinks that the City, to some extent, adding that he hates to put it in these terms, need to recognize that this battle is not going to be won at the State, but can be won on our home turf with improvements that we can make in that neighborhood and elsewhere to address the very legitimate issues that Councilmembers have brought up.

Councilman McKeon replies that he respects the Mayor's authority and understands his authority with regards to the Department of Transportation. He also appreciates the Mayor working with the Council, adding that we can respectfully disagree that this is the end, that the State won the battle. He does not accept that yet, personally, noting that there is more than one way to skin a cat. If it has to be an argument played out on the public court, then so be it. He does know that our legislative leaders do have some power and that the Commissioner of the department of Transportation does have some power. . He also knows that the outcry from the public is unanimous, noting that no one came in to say, "What a great idea for Main Street," reiterating "no one." He personally is not ready to waive the white flag and will work as diligently as he can to get to a point where we can do the best for Middletown.

Mayor Florsheim replies that he was searching for the right phrasing. He does not want it to seem that we are going to have to live with the reality as sketched out to the City last night. He states that, in a conversation with one of the project engineers today, they talked about what someone mentioned last night: the left turn into Kings Avenue and what would be the reprieve for someone trying to make that left turn from Main Street if there is traffic choked all the way to the other side of the street and no way for people to make that left turn. Mayor Florsheim explains that he asked if there could be some sort of signage, some dedicated streetscape element to facilitate that. The response was that they would talk to their Traffic Division about it.

Councilman McKeon replies that is great, adding that he has one more comment: the shocking thing about it was that they didn't even know that Kings Avenue existed. They did a study of the road and didn't know it existed.

Mayor Florsheim replies, "Right."

Unidentified speak (*Inaudible*).

The Chair states that, for the record, the Department of Transportation works for the State of Connecticut and the citizens therein.

Mayor Florsheim replies, "Yes."

The Chair states that the State operates governed by "we the people" in terms of elected leaders, the Department of Transportation, the General Assembly and the like.

Mayor Florsheim replies, "Sure."

The Chair states that the statutes that are currently on the books that may be causing Middletown problems can be changed.

Mayor Florsheim replies, "True."

The Chair states that the General Assembly, our legislators, can help make such changes. Mayor Florsheim replies, "Sure."

Councilman Nocera states that, to rephrase something he said earlier, he saw the door open at the beginning of yesterday's meeting, last night at McDonough School, where the State said that they are accustomed to working with the elected officials on modifications of projects as they come forward with their representative in the community as well as staff to meet on these issues. He did not see the door shut. He moves to ask for the Mayor's support to establish a Councilmanic committee that includes essential staff and community representatives to negotiate with Connecticut DOT regarding the improvements of this project.

Mayor Florsheim replies that he would be happy to support a committee along those lines. He can tell the Council that, based on his conversations with DOT, they are going to want to continue working directly the Mayor's Office as the chief elected office of the City. If such a committee could play the role as an advisory committee on transportation policy, he believes that that would work very well. He also thinks that they need to keep in mind that, to Councilman McKeon's' previous points, that such a committee would not, or be, in the best position to make decisions on a project that is imminent. The committee can be used as a forum to discuss modifications and improvements, perhaps after the fact improvements to that section of Main Street. So that we don't encounter the same issue in the future with larger scale projects or smaller scale projects or any projects in between. We do not want to be caught unaware and be caught in a position. As previously said the loss of a few parking spaces on Main Street is so significantly impactful because we have not added parking at the rate that we should have been. An increase of vehicular traffic in a residential neighborhood of the City will be problematic because we haven't taken the step that we should have taken to calm traffic in those neighborhoods. He reiterates that he would support the spirit of such a committee, adding that it would not just be one about interacting with DOT about individual projects, but could help shape the transportation policy in cooperation with DOT and the City of Middletown going forward.

The Chair interjects, offering point of order and asking General Counsel Brig Smith to weigh in. The Chair states that he does not believe that the Council can take up a formal resolution because this is a special meeting. He states that he does not know if the Council can or cannot, noting that it has not been seconded and is just a recommendation

Attorney Smith replies that this is a workshop and, to the extent that the Council is looking at not just a Councilmanic, in other words, not just Councilmembers on the commission, but department heads, staff, or members of the public, the usual process is that the Mayor appoints and confirms so it would be a special process by the Mayor's office

The Chair replies, saying that it is a recommendation for the Mayor to consider. The Chair states that it is now 6:34 PM.

5. Meeting adjourned

There being no further discussion, the Chair asks for a motion to adjourn. Councilman Eugene Nocera moves to adjourn. Councilman Edward McKeon seconds the motion. There being no discussion, the Chair calls for a vote. There motion passes unanimously with 12 aye votes (Councilmembers Blackwell, Carta, Faulkner, D. Ford, E. Ford, Gennaro, Loffredo, Mangiafico, McKeon, Nocera, Pessina, and Salafia). The motion is approved.

The meeting is adjourned at 6:35 PM.

ATTEST:

LINDA S.K. REED,
COMMON COUNCIL CLERK

K: review/minutes/special meeting Arrigoni Bridge – 11 March 2020